



The Link

May 2000

The National Organization of Professional Black Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees

2000 Executive Board

President
James Tatum
Maryland

Vice President
Geraldine Osborn
National Headquarters

Treasurer
Charles Roberts
Tennessee

Corresponding Secretary
LaSharn Belt
North Carolina

Recording Secretary
Jacqueline Roscoe
National Headquarters

Parliamentarian
Cynthia Jordan
South Carolina

Historian
Eric Banks
Indiana

2000 Regional Representatives

East
Wytonya Jackson
Pennsylvania

Midwest
Percy Magee
Ohio

National Headquarters
Denise Brooks
Washington, D.C.

Northern Plains
Leroy Stokes
Nebraska

South Central
Brenda Moore
Texas

Southeast
Eston Williams
Tennessee

West
Richard Bruce
New Mexico

Lead Story

Celebrating Success, Embracing Change Highlighted The Organization's 8th Training Conference

(Editor's Note: Additional conference articles, including information on videotapes, will be published in the next issue of The Link.)

Discussions on the Clean Water Action Plan, soils, and ethics as well as training workshops and award ceremonies were among the highlights of the National Organization of Professional Black Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees' 8th Annual Training Conference, held in Atlanta in December 1999. More than 400 people attended the conference.

Host State Conservationist Earl Cosby and Charles Adams, Regional Conservationist-Southeast, welcomed conference participants to Georgia. The Organization has grown considerably, Cosby said. Now we must create a mechanism to move people into the NRCS mainstream, he contends. Cosby also cautioned that much work remains to be done.

The Organization and its members can have a tremendous impact in the natural resource arena, Cosby added. "The battle lines are being drawn right now regarding the 2002 Farm Bill. Environmentalists, conservationists and farmers are lining up to get their ideas on the table. We also have a tremendous opportunity to make an impact on the future... Will we be proactive or reactive to what's being put on the table?"

Charles Adams reflected on George Washington Carver, made famous for developing multiple uses for the peanut. He asked conference participants to imagine how difficult it was for Carver to embark from his birthplace to attend Iowa State University. Carver chose to pursue his knowledge in an environment that was completely foreign to him. However, opportunities were available to him at Iowa State at the time and he took full advantage of them.

Al Hall, Historically Black Colleges and Universities Program Manager for the Forest Service, Washington, D.C., read his original poem entitled "We're Off To The Next Millennium."

Hall encourages us to sharpen our tools to take advantage of the opportunities that will be offered to us in the next millennium.

"This is not about simply doing only for self. There are those whom we must show the way. Organization members, this flight is leaving, and we're taking off from here today."

President James Tatum motivated conference participants with an inspiring message. He thanked conference participants and the NRCS leadership for supporting The



Organization. This conference should provide us with opportunities to seek new and improved ways of gaining knowledge to help us bridge the new millennium, Tatum said.

The new millennium fosters an eternal optimism in people, he added. Some people believe that all the ills we have encountered during the past millennium will be cured. War will become a thing of the past. However, if we find cures for many of the nation's woes, it will not occur because of magic or luck, he continued. Rather, hard work and dedication of people always will be the method for success in finding solutions to mankind's problems.

Tatum offered the following tips for one to achieve his or her goals in this millennium:

- Adopt an attitude of "I can." We must believe we can achieve our goals. There is an old saying that success is built on "can't's," not "can't". We must eliminate all self doubts about succeeding in the new and challenging endeavors that face us. Our daily mantra should be, "I can, I can, I can" as we face challenges and obstacles.

- Adopt an attitude of "I will." It is not enough to believe you can achieve your goals, you must take steps to make those desires a reality. The Bible says, "Faith without works is dead." This saying also applies to your goals.

"If your local elementary, middle, or high school needs a mentoring program, do not wait for someone else to organize it. Do it yourself. If there is a park or playground in need of cleaning up or repair, do not hesitate because others may or may not help you. Go forward knowing the difference a clean play environment can make in the lives of our children. If it is that college or master's degree you have always thought about, enroll now."

- Adopt an attitude of "I must." Once you have visualized your goals and taken the initial steps to reach them, you must then add a sense of urgency. "There exists today a belief that all things come to those who wait," Tatum said. "I believe that if we wait for our time to come, we will see it pass us by, or more likely, see someone else race ahead of us and take it. The time for us to break down barriers is today. The time for us to build foundations for success is now.... We must stop relying on the good will of others and turn to our own abilities as we strive to make our world better for our children, our grandchildren, and ourselves."

"This sense of urgency should be infused in everything we do."

Presidents from other professional organizations also gave remarks. They

were Mon Yee, Asian Pacific Islander Employee Organization; Rebecca de la Torre, Hispanic NRCS Employees Association, and Richard Vigil, American Indian/Alaskan Native NRCS Employees Association. Each president stressed the groups' similarities and encouraged participants to work toward common goals.

Leonard Jordan, SWCS' West Regional Representative, encouraged conference participants to become involved in SWCS. He also urged them to send articles to "Conservation Voices," a relatively new SWCS magazine.

Other representatives who gave remarks included Reggis "Reggie" Skains, President, National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils; Gary Mast, Second Vice President for the National Association of Conservation Districts; and a South Carolina farmer who spoke on behalf of the Rural American Association of Community-Based Organizations.

Ron Harris, of the Animal Husbandry and Clean Water Programs Division, did a presentation on Animal Feeding Operations.



Glenda Humiston, USDA's Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, presented the Small Farmers Award to the Michigan Chapter on behalf of

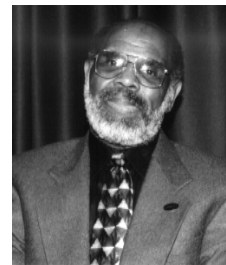
the winner, Dr. LeRoi Ray of Michigan, during the Small Farmer Luncheon. She also delivered an address.

Six training workshops, coordinated by the National Employee Development Center, were offered. They were Managing for Excellence, Effective Interpersonal Skills, Economics of Conservation Planning, Water Quality Resource Assessment, Soil Bioengineering and Working Effectively with Livestock Producers. Each participant selected one course and received a Certificate at the end of the eight-hour course.

The Honorable Danny K. Davis, 7th Congressional District, Illinois, delivered the keynote address at the banquet.



The President's Message



Greetings!

As I begin my fourth and final year as your president, I want to thank the members for their best wishes and support. We have made great strides in bridging the gap to the new millennium and achieving our field of dreams. We accomplished this goal by working together with a set vision and common goals. I hope that we can continue to work for common purposes; such an effort can only ensure greater success, thereby giving rise to the true meaning of professionalism. A special word of thanks goes to Leonard Jordan, Demitrice G. Boozer, Selena Miller, Jean Swygert and M. Dewayne Mays, who have left the executive board, for their exceptional service to The Organization. Each of you, in your own unique way, added so much to The Organization's success. I thank each of you for your commitment.

Let me welcome four new executive board members, who have high expectations and new ideas: Eric Banks, Historian; Richard Bruce, Regional Representative-West; Leroy Stokes, Regional Representative-Northern Plains; and Wytonya Jackson, Regional Representative-East. Please join me in welcoming these individuals to the executive board.

On behalf of the 443 members of The Organization, my sincere appreciation and thanks goes to the National Employee Development Center Staff. Your special effort to develop and deliver high quality training at the 8th Annual Training Conference held on December 7-11, 1999, in Atlanta, Georgia, was outstanding. It is pleasing to know that individuals, such as the course developers and presenters, are willing to make a difference in people's lives. Again, special thanks and heartfelt appreciation to each of you, for your efforts in making our training conference a success.

Let us not forget that just 17 days into the new millennium we celebrated the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. As Dr. King once said, "One of life's most pressing and urgent questions is what are you doing for others?" As Dr. King encouraged people to give time and resources to their communities, we also

recognize the importance of giving and helping others. I encourage all members to stand fast in their efforts to help all Americans “find their place in the dream.”

Finally, let me say that the executive board will continue to improve the quality of service to The Organization’s members in all areas, especially in training and professional development. However, we need each of you to become an active player. Pay your membership dues. Volunteer for committee assignments. Prepare yourself to conduct workshops. Teach training courses. Make these contributions, and our members will be well serviced.

James E. Tatum

James E. Tatum, President

Regional Roundup

Start planning now for your regional training conference. Remember, you can attend a training conference outside of your region. Below are the dates for several meetings as of April 2000:

<i>Southeast</i>	<i>June 21-22, 2000</i>
	<i>Lexington, KY</i>
<i>South Central</i>	<i>July 19 - 21, 2000</i>
	<i>Lafayette, LA</i>
<i>East</i>	TBA
<i>West</i>	TBA
<i>Northern Plains</i>	TBA
<i>Midwest</i>	TBA
<i>National Headquarters</i>	<i>August 2000</i>
	<i>Location TBA</i>

Please contact Sylvia Rainford at 651-602-7859 with your updates.

Important Notice –

Organization Changes Days of Annual Training Conference

The Organization’s 9th Annual Training Conference will be held ***Tuesday, December 5th through Friday, December 8th, 2000*** in Atlanta. This is the first time the conference will be held during the week. More information about this change will be forthcoming.

Dr. Nikki Giovanni Delivered Powerful Speech with Punch, Humor

*Submitted by Dorothea Martinez,
South Carolina and Sylvia Rainford,
Editor*



Dr. Nikki Giovanni’s message to conference participants packed a powerful punch. Sprinkling her message with humor and advice, she discussed an array of topics, including education, music, civil rights, history, and her love for the Pullman porters of railroad fame. She wove personal stories throughout her keynote address, causing her audience to laugh, reflect, and then laugh again.

The Knoxville, TN native reminded her audience of the many trials and tribulations our grandparents and their parents suffered so that we may enjoy a better life. They endured much; and we now enjoy the fruits of their labor. It’s our prayer that our children do not have to endure similar trials and tribulations to enjoy a good life.

Dr. Giovanni, a renowned poet and an English professor at Virginia Tech, said a broadcaster asked her recently who was the most important person in the 20th century. “Without blinking an eye, I delivered my answer—Rosa Parks.” She said Rosa Parks demonstrated tremendous courage when she refused to give up her seat to a white passenger. She was tired and she simply said, “I’m not moving.” That day changed the course of history because it made a tremendous difference in the lives of African Americans. Martin Luther King could not have achieved what he did without Rosa Parks, Dr. Giovanni added.

With her actions, Rosa Parks became an agent of change. “When the word got out that Rosa Parks was arrested, the world changed,” Dr. Giovanni said. “We would all like to be that agent of change. If we could wake up in the morning and do something to make the world notice the pain and the agony, or if we could wake up in the morning and do something and the world notice the joy....”

Dr. Giovanni delved into the wounds of slavery, but she reminded us that that ordeal strengthened us as a people. We became survivors. “It’s a wonderful thing to be a Black American. I always recommend us,” she said with a chuckle. However, her tone became serious when she said: “Despite what we went through from 1619 until now, we have maintained a sense of humor. We have found a way to create a song. We have found a way to maintain ourselves, to laugh, to love, to stay strong and to stay true.”

She reminded her audience that African-Americans built this country. As a result, we should take pride in our achievements. She highlighted African American agricultural achievements to further illustrate her point. For instance, Booker T. Washington was given land in Alabama. The land was red clay and considered worthless by the donors. Washington envisioned an agricultural school—now Tuskegee University. The donors thought Washington could not possibly grow crops in such poor soil. Washington, a brilliant individual, brought in George Washington Carver from Iowa State to help him with the school. While at Tuskegee Institute, Carver grew peanut in the red clay. He discovered multiple uses for it. As we know, the rest is history.

“Tuskegee Institute is a great institution to this day,” Dr. Giovanni said. “Everyone thought we would fail, but we came up with everything we needed to make things work.”

Dr. Giovanni shared her personal experiences about how good it was back in the day when we really looked after each other. She was referring to the time when she and her sister traveled by train and how the Pullman porters looked after them and made sure they arrived at their destination safely. Their parents made this arrangement with the porters. Since she grew up in Cincinnati, Ohio, Dr. Giovanni and her sister visited her Knoxville relatives by train. She said the porters would always yell, “Are you girls all right?” It was their way of letting people on the train know that someone was looking out for the girls.

“Those black men looked after us because they loved us,” she said.

Dr. Giovanni ended her presentation by reading a tribute to the Pullman porters of her past, a beautiful poem entitled, “*Train Ride*.”

Dr. Giovanni is the author of numerous books, including “*Blues: For All the Changes*” (1999), “*Selected Poems of Nikki Giovanni*” (1996) and “*The Love Poems of Nikki Giovanni*” (1997). Her most

recent children's books are "*The Genie in the Jar*" with Chris Raschka and "*The Sun Is So Quiet*" with Ashley Bryan."

She won the NAACP Image Award for *Love Poems* in 1998 and the Langston Hughes Award in 1996.

She is a member of the Board of Directors of the New River Valley Literacy Volunteers of America.

Nearly 40 "STARS" Attend The Organization's Training Conference

Submitted by Suzanne H. Pugh, Mississippi

High school students, attending The Organization's 8th Annual Training Conference in Atlanta last December, knew very little about the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). That all changed after the three-day conference, however.

For the first time, The Organization invited nearly 40 high school students, grades 10 through 12, to attend the conference to expose them to NRCS and potential careers in agriculture.

Now the students are STARS—thanks to the creative thinking of Charles R. Adams, Southeast Regional Conservationist. STAR, an acronym for "Student Trainees in Agriculture Resources," is a follow up program Adams created after the training conference.

This project all started when Adams invited 36 students and 10 chaperones from Virginia, Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, Tennessee, Kentucky, South Carolina, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and the Virgin Islands to attend the training conference and participate in a "special" outreach and recruitment activity offered by the Southeast Region.

Adams and 23 members of his Southeast and South Central regional staff spent a morning explaining their education tracks and current positions with the agency. Students were also encouraged to study hard, stay focused, maintain a good attitude, and keep their minds and options open.

"It was apparent the students were listening during the staff presentations," Adams said. "We passed out packets of information about the agency, speaker resumes, and opportunities with the Earth Team before they left. The students were regional Earth Team volunteers before and during the conference; but when they



returned home, they became Earth Team volunteers in their own communities."

Some students spoke to Glenda Humiston, Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment. Inspired by comments made by Humiston during the Small Farmer luncheon and several NRCS employees earlier that morning, several students told NRCS officials the trip and learning experience were major turning points in their lives. They said they were committed to finding employment with the agency once they've completed their education.

"I think the students went home with a different perspective about careers in agriculture," Adams said. "They got to see first-hand there were other jobs in agriculture besides working on their farms."

Lesia Young, NRCS-Southeast Region's Outreach Coordinator, will work with the Social Sciences Institute to develop a process to track each student's college and career choices. This will help the agency market itself as well as assist the students in their educational development, Young added. Ultimately, this program will assist the agency in its efforts to encourage students to enter agricultural careers.

To foster the momentum gained at the conference, Adams created the follow-up program called STAR. Each student will be a "STAR" at school and in the community.

"State outreach coordinators in the region will help students to encourage more interest in agriculture among their peers and increase the community's awareness about the programs and services offered by USDA-NRCS. It's a win-win situation!"

Young said the Southeast Region designed this program with the following

three goals in mind when it undertook this project:

- to target youth, also an underserved group

- to connect with the Earth Team program by signing up the students as volunteers

- to market NRCS to the students so they consider a career with the agency.

Young also said the students' attendance at last year's conference is dedicated to the late Sam Combs of Oklahoma, former Chair of The Organization's Liaisons Committee and a retired NRCS employee. The Southeast Region funded a proposal presented by Combs through an organization he founded called Retired Educators for Agriculture Program, or REAP. REAP's mission is to introduce African American youth to agriculture.

For more information about student outreach and recruitment in the NRCS Southeast Region, please contact Lesia Young at (404) 347-6105; e-mail, lesia.young@se.nrcs.usda.gov, or voice-mail, 9021-8009.

The Organization Honors Members for Their Contributions, Achievements

Compiled by Sylvia Rainford, Editor

Several people were honored for exceptional contributions on behalf of The Organization and/or the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

NRCS Chief Pearlle Reed and **Midwest Regional Conservationist Charles Whitmore** shared the President's Award for their outstanding leadership and unwavering support of The Organization.



Mary A. Williams of Missouri received the Distinguished Service Award. She was honored for “outstanding contribution and assistance in outreach to communities in the St. Louis area.” Williams, an Urban Specialist in the St. Louis Outreach Office, developed an Earth Team program in the St. Louis metropolitan area with 300 volunteers. She also developed a tracking system, which she maintains, to link the volunteers to NRCS projects. Williams also works with an association that services limited resource farmers through the Robertsville Area Betterment Association of Franklin County. Volunteers in the association developed a resource plan to address locally identified concerns. They have also begun several community improvement projects such as housing rehabilitation, vacant lot cleanup and road safety and improvement.

William Stokes, Jr. of Minnesota also received the Distinguished Service Award. He was honored for “his commitment and significant contributions to workforce diversity” in Minnesota. Stokes, Water Resources Team Leader in St. Paul, has spent the past four years assisting African Americans to advance or begin their careers with NRCS in Minnesota. Stokes, the state’s Black Emphasis Program Manager, has recruited many students from 1890 institutions across the nation over the past several years. His accomplishments are many. For example, he assisted State Conservationist William Hunt to develop a two-week workshop for student interns and co-op students. Twenty-five diverse students from 13 colleges and universities nationwide learned all aspects of NRCS’s work, including conservation practices, programs, engineering and human resources.



Alice Love, Wetland Conservationist in Indiana, received the Special Recognition Award for her involvement with the Hoosier/Buckeye Chapter

and her achievements as Indiana’s Black Emphasis Program Manager. As President of Hoosier/Buckeye, Love spearheaded the development of a strategic plan and an annual plan for the chapter. Because of her leadership, the chapter accomplished 90 percent of its goals for Fiscal Year 1999. In addition, she has assisted the Midwest Region with its annual training conference as a member of the Planning Committee. As Special Emphasis Program Manager, she secured funding for the “USDA Black History Celebration Day” in Indiana.

Lincoln Ed Burton, State Conservationist in Wyoming, received the Special Recognition Award, for his support of The Organization nationally and regionally. He attends most of the national and regional conferences and encourages his employees to participate in The Organization’s events and activities. Though there is only one black employee in Wyoming, Burton volunteered to host the Northern Plains 1998 Regional Conference. The conference was very successful. He also recruits students from the 1890 colleges and universities.



Estella Williams, Regional Civil Rights Manager, South Central Regional Office, received the Professional Achievement Award for her continued support of The Organization and her involvement in various Organization activities.



Lannie Smith of Arkansas received The Organization’s first Pioneer Award. During his many years with the agency, Lannie, now retired, endured hardships, erased

barriers and paved the way for hundreds of young employees to attain employment with the former Soil Conservation Service and NRCS. Throughout his career, he has represented the highest standards of professionalism and integrity and has created a lasting legacy for all employees.

Dr. LeRoi Ray, Director of the Black Americana Studies Program at Western Michigan University, received the Small Farmer Award for his contributions to youth in western Michigan. He served as an advisor for the first Minority Grower’s Conference in western Michigan, organized by the Michigan chapter. Dr. Ray also offers a free, week-long course on natural resources and gardening at his farm school for youths ages 10 through 15. Youngsters learn about chemistry, soil science and the metric system. The youths harvest their produce and learn how to can and sell them. The highlight of the summer activities is a vegetable feast where the children dine on the crops they grow.

Brooks Becomes The Organization’s First Lifetime Member



Denise Brooks, Regional Representative for National Headquarters, became The Organization’s first lifetime member last year.

President James Tatum presented her with an award at the annual training conference.

Brooks said she paid the \$500 lifetime membership fee because she feels a strong commitment toward The Organization. “The Organization has given me so much over the years, that a lifetime membership is a small token of my appreciation.

I want to be part of such a great organization that does so much with so little,” she added. “It gives me a sense of belonging and makes me feel that I am a part of something important.”

Brooks's dedication and commitment to The Organization is well documented. She served on the Communications Committee for several years before becoming a Regional Representative. She still remains an avid contributor to the newsletter. ■

The Organization's Scholars

Submitted by Rose Webb, Arkansas

Ten students received \$500 scholarships from The Organization at its annual conference in Atlanta.

The students are listed below:

1. **Evelyn C. Ashford**, Junior, Tennessee State University, Major: Agricultural Sciences, Grade Point Average (GPA) - 3.6

2. **Shena R. Ashley**, Junior, Tennessee State University, Major: Agricultural Business, GPA - 4.0

3. **Courtney A. Dixon**, Senior, Prairie View A&M University, Major: Agricultural Economics, GPA - 3.9

4. **Joni Y. Franklin**, Sophomore, Tennessee State University, Major: Agronomy, GPA - 3.9

5. **LaTersa D. Hampton**, Junior, University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, Major: Agricultural Economics, GPA - 3.2

6. **Vilma V. Hines**, Sophomore, University of Maryland-Eastern Shore, Major: Agricultural Business, GPA - 4.0

7. **Mario D. Ingram**, Junior, North Carolina A&T State University, Major: Laboratory Animal Science, GPA - 4.0

8. **Akilah R. Martin**, Senior, Alabama A&M University, Major - Soil Science, GPA - 3.9

9. **Charles M. Smith**, Junior, Prairie View A&M University, Major - Agricultural Economics, GPA - 3.9

10. **Kristal J. Southern**, Junior, Tuskegee University, Major: Animal Science, GPA - 3.9 ■

Louisiana Chapter Receives Charter

Submitted by Randolph Joseph, Jr., Louisiana

Louisiana became The Organization's newest chapter when it received its official charter at the 8th Annual Training Conference in December 1999.

The officers are as follows:

President—Randolph Joseph, Jr., Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations

Vice President **Jerry Hall**
District Conservationist

Secretary **Jeanette Bradley**
District Conservationist

Treasurer **Aaron Hinkston**
Agricultural Economist

Historian **Wanda Simmons**
Area Administrative Assistant

Parliamentarian **Edward Scott**
Soil Scientist

The Louisiana chapter will host this year's South Central Regional Training Conference in Lafayette, Louisiana in Creole/Cajun style. The conference is scheduled for July 19-21, 2000. Tentative agenda items include:

- Thrift Savings Program
- Planning for Retirement
- Interpersonal Skills
- Marsh Tour
- Plant Materials
- Employee Development Plans

Future projects include:

- Working closely with Southern University's BAYOU students
- Recruitment
- Outreach Activities
- Working with Urban Youth

The Organization now has 19 chapters across the United States. ■

Ethics Discussion Spurs Strong Interest

Submitted by Caryl J. Butcher, Agency Ethics Advisor, NRCS

- What constitutes misuse of e-mail?
- Is the wife of a district conservationist allowed to work for the district board?
- Is it OK to take a Government vehicle to the store for personal items in travel status?

These are just a few written questions submitted by conference participants for responses during the Ethics presentation and panel discussion at the National Organization of Professional Black NRCS Employees' 8th Annual Training Conference. The strong interest in ethics reinforced earlier indications that NRCS employees need more avenues to access information and get answers to common ethics concerns and issues. This seems especially true for field staff, since they generally do not work in the same location as their ethics advisor. The overwhelming response also suggested that employees

appreciated the opportunity to ask questions anonymously.

In response to the strong interest shown by participants, the NRCS Ethics Program now offers all employees easy access to ethics information on the Internet at <http://www.nhq.nrcs.usda.gov/ethics>. Employees can use the office computer to directly access information and answers to various ethics questions and concerns. Employees who do not have Internet access at the office can access the new web site at home or through the public library. Many public libraries offer free Internet access.

Answers to the above and other questions submitted at the December 1999 annual training conference has begun to appear on the Ethics web site. The questions will be referred to the appropriate Division or Deputy Chief for answers. The responses will be prepared by the appropriate office (s) and then posted on the web site. For example, numerous questions sought information about the use of government phones, fax and copying equipment. These have been referred to the Information Technology Division for review and reply, as appropriate.

Additionally, in response to the large number of requests for more and specific information about this topic, the Deputy Chief for Management has established a team of specialists from Information Resources Management, Ethics, Human Resources, and Management Services to recommend and prepare needed guidance for our employees.

The NRCS Ethics web site also includes simple 'click and go' links to related Internet resources, such as USDA's interactive ethics training modules now available on eight topics. ■

Animal Feeding Operations Update

Submitted by Ronald A. Harris, Natural Resources Specialist, East Reg. and Jasper Parker, Asst. State Conservationist, Oklahoma

Livestock manure has emerged over the past few years as a major political and environmental issue.

"Social and political pressure to address the environmental impacts of livestock production has grown to the point that many policy-makers today are asking what to do, not whether to do something," the Congressional Research Service stated in a May 1998 report.

During the annual conference in December 1999, Ronald Harris updated conference participants on the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Environmental Protection Agency's Unified National Strategy on Animal Feeding Operations (AFOs).

Attention on the need for a national policy on AFOs reached a peak over the last few years, as evidenced by the issuance of the unified USDA/EPA strategy. At least 34 states have passed, voted on, or at least debated policies in the last five years that would directly or indirectly affect control of livestock manure. Numerous county and local governments have passed their own ordinances. Additionally, several national livestock producer groups have started their own initiatives during the past two years to curb manure runoff and related environmental problems.

The number of confined livestock operations has declined while the total number of animal units has increased. This shift to increased numbers of animals confined in certain geographic locations has the potential for livestock manure problems.

The Unified National Strategy for Animal Feeding Operations established a national expectation that Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMPs) will be planned and implemented by 2009. Based on the NRCS Partnership FY2000 Workload Analysis, 298,500 AFOs will need assistance to develop CNMPs. This is a tremendous challenge – one that will require major investments in research, technology development and transfer, training, technical assistance, and financial incentives to accomplish. Further, many small and limited resource farmers will need assistance to plan and implement their CNMPs. Outreach to these farmers will be critical to the strategy's success.

A CNMP, part of a conservation plan unique to AFOs, combines conservation practices and management activities into a system that considers both production and environmental protection concerns. CNMPs are to be developed in conjunction with the landowner/operator.

To get the needed technical guidance in place to help public and private technical specialists assist AFO owners and operators develop CNMPs, NRCS released the draft Technical Guidance for Developing Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans on December 9, 1999. This document underwent an extensive public comment period.

Given the magnitude and complexity of the CNMP workload, the public and private

sectors will need to collaborate. They will need to use NRCS's technical guidance for CNMP and supporting technical reference tools, if we are to achieve the goals outlined in the Unified National Strategy for AFOs.

Only certified individuals may develop, review and/or revise a CNMP. The State Conservationist will determine acceptable certification program(s) that can be used in his or her state.

The amount and comprehensiveness of technical assistance provided to producers will need to be increased in order to address the magnitude and complexity of the demand. This assistance will have to come from both the public and private sectors. ■

Words To Live By

*Submitted by Denise Brooks,
Regional Representative, National
Headquarters*

Some of the quotes below are familiar. Some are original. These profound words will cause you to reflect on your personal or professional life and provide an incentive for change.

An excuse maker is a person who builds a monument out of nothing.

*—James E. Tatum, President, The
Organization*

Minds, like parachutes, work only when they are open.

*—Mon Yeh, President, Asian Pacific Islander
Organization*

Institutions can change, but someone has to take a risk.

—Dr. John Francis, Founder, Plant Walk

Give someone a fish, they can eat for a day. But if you teach them how to fish, they can eat for a lifetime.

*—Glenda Humiston, Deputy Under Secretary
for Natural Resources and Environment.*

If you ain't right, you better get right.

—Lannie Smith, Retired

What it's all about is helping somebody. If you don't want to help nobody, you can be excused.

—Lannie Smith, Retired

Reach out and give of ourselves, what we have been blessed with.

—Rev. Clifford Jones, Retired.

The more precise, the better the advice.

—Caryl Butcher, Agency Ethics Advisor, NRCS ■

Committee Reports

Editor's Note: Reports for the Liaison and Urban committees were inadvertently left out of The Organization's 1999 Annual Report. We regret the omission. Their Reports are listed below:

Liaison Committee

1999 Committee Members:

Lloyd E. Wright, <i>Chair</i>	Sherman Lewis
Plater Campbell	Lannie Smith
Cliff Jones	Jackie Sutton
Paula Jones	

1999 Accomplishments Report:

- Reviewed and commented on proposed budget and legislation that would impact Black farmers.
- Met with a group of North Carolina black farmers, where they outlined their concerns related to services available to help them stay in farming.
- Assisted in planning a meeting of the major organizations of under-served farmers.

2000 GOALS:

- Keep The Organization members informed of legislative and political issues related to or impacting agricultural programs that are or may be of concern to the African American community.
- Solicit legislative and/or political concerns from members of The Organization.
- Remain cognizant of the prohibited political activities as set forth in Article XV of the Constitution of The Organization while engaging in legislative and political activities.

Urban Committee

Editor's Note: This report has been condensed for the newsletter. Please contact Thaddeus Hamilton, Urban Committee Chair, at 954-792-1984 for a copy of the full report.

1999 Committee Members

Thaddeus Hamilton, <i>Chair</i>	Karyn Pageau
Louie Boyd	Tommy Parham
George Cummings	Joyce Scheyer
Curtis Godfrey	Clifford Thornton
Joseph Haamid	Elbert Wells
Barry Hamilton	Melvin Westbrook
Cheryl Mitchell	Estella Williams
Allen Moore	John Wilson
LaSonya Moore	Melvin Womack

1999 Accomplishments Report

- ♦ Held eight teleconferences.
- ♦ Exhibited at the 8th Annual Training Conference in Atlanta, Georgia.
- ♦ Established the following sub-committees that are all active: Urban Awareness, Annual Report, Strategic

Plan, and Reporting System. The Annual Report subcommittee published a detailed annual report that contains urban activities in several states across the country.

- ◆ Hosted the urban workshop entitled “A New Approach to Outreach” at The Organization’s 1998 Annual Training Conference. The workshop enabled participants to better understand NRCS’s outreach activities to underserved customers. Topics included communications with underserved customers; Home*A*Syst/Farm*A*Syst; NACD Urban Programs, Outreach to Limited Resource Farmers, Underserved Customers, Environmental Justice and Urban Resources Partnership.
- ◆ Showcased urban activities of several states in a detailed annual report for The Organization.

Fundraising Highlights

Submitted by Frank Ellis, Ways and Means Committee Chair

The Organization exceeded its fundraising goal from two events—the silent action and the annual raffle. Below are the winners of the raffle:

- Tracy and Kathy Daugherty, Sale Creek, Tennessee
- Willie Pittman, Syracuse, New York
- Edward McAuther, Brookhaven, Mississippi

Twenty-seven people donated assorted items to the silent auction, a resounding success this year.



Book Review...

**“Maximum Achievement”–
By Brian Tracy**

*Reviewed by: Dorothea Martinez,
Columbia, South Carolina*

- ☐ Are you interested in improving your personal relationships?
- ☐ Would you like to master the art of parenting?

If you answered **yes** to the above questions, **“Maximum Achievement”**, is the book for you.

Tracy’s **Seven Laws of Mental Mastery** is quite fascinating. They are described briefly below.

The Law of Control: We feel positive about ourselves when we feel we are in control of our lives. We feel negative about ourselves when we feel we are controlled by an external force, person or influence. For example, if you feel your life is controlled by debts, your job or a bad relationship, you will probably suffer from stress, which can result in anger or resentment. You can take control of your life by controlling your thoughts—how you think about a situation determines how you feel and how you behave. You can control a situation such as this by either changing the situation or walking away from it. You can gain self-confidence when you feel in control. A person with a clear purpose and a plan always has an edge over someone who is vague or unsure.

The Law of Cause and Effect: For every effect in our lives, there is a specific cause. Everything happens for a reason, Tracy said, whether we know it or not. For example, if you repeat the same actions and get the same results, it’s easier to blame someone or society for the results than to change your actions. The way we think affects everything we are or will ever be. If we change the quality of our thinking, we will change the quality of our lives.

The Law of Belief: Whatever we believe, with feeling, becomes our reality. The more intensely we believe something to be true, the more likely it will be true for us. If we absolutely believe we are meant to be successful in life, then no matter what happens, we will work toward achieving our goals to become successful.

The Law of Expectations: Whatever we expect with confidence becomes our own self-fulfilling prophecy, according to Tracy. He illustrated his point with this story: A teacher was told she would be given the brightest students to teach for the upcoming school year. While teaching that year, she gave special attention to students who were having problems to ensure they understood the concepts. At the end of the school year all the students performed exceptionally well. Afterwards, the teacher learned she had been participating in an experiment and had not actually been given the brightest students after all. Instead, she was given low achieving students. The moral to this scenario is that the teacher expected the students to do well; therefore she helped some of them to ensure they succeeded. The extra attention caused the students to perform well.

The Law of Attraction: We are living magnets. We invariably attract into our lives people and situations in harmony with our dominant thoughts. I’m sure you’ve heard the old adage, “birds of a feather flock together.” As we examine every aspect of our lives, we will see that we create our own world. We control the types of people who enter our lives by our choices; inevitably, we attract people in our lives who are most like ourselves.

The Law of Correspondence: Our outer world is a reflection of our inner world. We can tell what is going on inside an individual by looking at what is going on around him or her. Tracy explains that most people try to improve or change aspects of their lives by trying to change others. They don’t like what they see reflecting back at them in the mirror of their lives so they work at polishing the mirror instead of going to the source of the reflection. One of the most important questions we can ask ourselves is, “what kind of person do I have to be to earn the respect of the people I care about and live the kind of life I want to live?”

The Law of Mental Equivalency: Our thoughts—vividly imagined and repeated, charged with emotion—become our reality. “Almost everything we have in our lives has been created by our own thinking, for better or for worse,” Tracy said. “We act in a manner consistent with what we are thinking most of the time. We eventually become what we think about—and if we change our thinking, we change our lives.”

About the Author:

Brian Tracy is one of America’s top professional speakers and seminar leaders. He has conducted consulting and training assignments for hundreds of corporations, large and small. More than one million people have attended his programs on success, sales effectiveness, and personal fulfillment.

Mentoring

*Submitted by Burthel Thomas,
Arkansas*

The art of mentoring has been practiced for many years. The word “mentor” was personified in Homer’s *The Odyssey*. Mentor, a close friend of Odysseus, cared for his son, Telemachus, for 10 years while Odysseus traveled. Mentor, disguised as the goddess Athena, embodied both male and female personas. She was the ideal mentor, showing traits of a nurturer,

supporter, protector and risk taker. Mentor/Athena played all the roles that a mentor should play today: teacher, friend, guide and protector.

Mentoring is a very subjective art. A mentor can be many things to many people. In the agency a mentor should introduce the mentee to the values and standards of a profession and the agency. At the same time, the mentor gives the mentee a sense of career direction. This is perhaps where some fail to embrace the full scope of the mentoring process. Employees in leadership positions need to recognize the potential impact that they can have on the lives of young employees, simply by providing time for a few moments of professional guidance. All too often, leaders find themselves too busy to talk with young employees about the agency and their careers.

Finally, if NRCS wants to maintain its champions and winners, and provide opportunities for employees to become champions and winners, we must be about the business of mentoring our gifted and talented employees.

Organization Member Appointed to USDA Advisory Board

USDA Secretary Dan Glickman has appointed Homer Wilkes, State Conservationist in Mississippi, to serve on USDA's National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education and Economics Advisory Board.

Wilkes was among six new members appointed by Secretary Glickman late last year to serve on the 30-member board. His term ends in 2002. Wilkes will provide input to the Secretary on natural resource concerns.

Wilkes has served as State Conservationist in Mississippi since 1994. His former positions with NRCS include Administrative Assistant in Massachusetts and Assistant Financial Manager and Fiscal Specialist at National Headquarters. He also headed the administrative staff at the former South National Technical Center in Fort Worth. The Jackson State University graduate also serves on numerous advisory boards in his state, as well as on various national task forces and conservation organizations.

Seeking Information on Childcare

*Submitted by Jacqueline Roscoe,
National Headquarters*

Are you the parent(s) of children between the ages of 6 months and 13 years? Would you be interested in child care while on official government travel? If so, please email your complete name and address to: jackie.roscoe@usda.gov or fax it to 301-504-2248.

Calendar of Events

June 2000

National River Cleanup Week

June 3-10

Check out the Web site at <http://www.americaoutdoors.org/> or contact National River Cleanup Week, P.O. Box 10847, Knoxville, Tennessee 37939. Phone: (865) 558-3595, or fax (865) 558-3598. E-mail amoutdoors@aol.com

Association of State Floodplain Managers' 24th Annual Conference

June 16-23 – Austin, Texas

"Floodplain Management 2000 and Beyond: A New Beginning in a New Millennium." For reservations, call (512) 477-1234.

National Association of RC&D Councils Conference

June 18-21 – Ogden, Utah

Your contacts are the National Association of RC&D Councils at (202) 434-4780, and David Spann, Coordinator, Bonneville RC&D Office, 1030 West 5370 South, Murray, Utah 84123. Phone: (801) 262-6838. Fax: (801) 263-3667. E-mail: mpatten@ditell.com

The Organization's Southeast Regional Training Conference

June 21-22 – Lexington, Kentucky

Contact Regional Representative Eston Williams at 423-674-8890

National Organization of Professional Hispanic NRCS Employees (NOPHNRCS) 8th Annual Training Conference

June 26-29 – Washington, D.C.

Theme: "Hispanics-The New Dynamic." In conjunction with the Hispanic Emphasis Program Managers (HEPM) and Federal

Women Program Managers (FWPM) training sessions. For more information call Gerry Gonzalez (NOPHNRCS) on (602) 280-8777, Rafael Salazar (HEPM) on (706) 554-5183, or Sheila Greene (FWPM) on (301) 504-2178.

July 2000

SWCS Annual Conference: Gateway to the Future—Conserving Private Land

July 8-12 – St. Louis, Missouri

Information is available on the Soil and Water Conservation Society's Web page at <http://www.swcs.org> Your contact is Charlie Persinger, SWCS, Director of Member Services, 7515 NE Ankeny Road, Ankeny, Iowa 50021-9764. Voice: (515) 289-2331, ext. 12. Fax: (515) 289-1227. Email: charliep@swcs.org

The Organization's South Central Regional Training Conference

July 19-21 – Lafayette, LA

Contact Regional Representative Brenda Moore at 817-509-3249 for more information.

August 2000

National Headquarters' Regional Meeting

Dates and Location: TBA

Please contact Regional Representative Denise Brooks at 202-690-4242 for more information.

Carbon: Exploring the Benefits to Farmers and Society

August 29-31, 2000 – Des Moines, Iowa

This conference will focus on the impacts and benefits of carbon sequestration as it affects agricultural producers, society, and the environment. For more information about the conference contact Alice Vinsand at avinsand@aol.com; telephone: 515-225-1051; Fax: 515-225-8187.

December 2000

The National Organization of Professional Black Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees' 9th Annual Training Conference

December 5-8 – Atlanta, Georgia

The conference will begin on Tuesday, December the 5 and end on Friday, the 8. Please contact Conference Coordinator Sarah Marshall at 301-504-2224.

National Organization of Professional Black NRCS Employees 2000 Membership Application

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Telephone: () _____

Willing to serve on: _____ Committee, if asked. Yes___ No___
(Agriculture, Budget, Communications, By-laws, Employee Career, HBCU, Liaisons, Ways & Means, Awards, or Planning or Urban)

About the Organization

The Organization is comprised of the National Organization and chapters throughout the United States. Membership is open to all Natural Resource Conservation Service employees and to any other persons supporting the goals and objectives of The Organization.

National membership dues are \$35.00. Chapter dues are established by each chapter and are payable in addition to national. ***Only National dues should be sent to the National Treasurer.*** Membership dues will not be accepted after November 1st for the current calendar year.

National Dues: \$35.00

Chapter Membership: _____
(Name of Chapter)

Region: ☐ East ☐ Midwest ☐ National Headquarters ☐ Northern Plains
☐ South Central ☐ Southeast ☐ West

Network Directory

Please complete the following information if you would like to be listed in The Organization's Network Directory.

Name: _____ Title: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ - _____

Contact Telephone: () _____ Fax: () _____

E-mail: _____

Region: ☐ East ☐ Midwest ☐ Natn'l Headquarters ☐ Northern Plains ☐ South Central ☐ Southeast ☐ West

Willing to serve on: _____ Committee, if asked. Yes___ No___
(Agriculture, Budget, Communications, By-laws, Employee Career, HBCU, Liaisons, Ways & Means, Awards, or Planning or Urban)

Make check payable to: "The Organization"
Mail completed form to:
Charles V. Roberts
508 Woodmere Drive, Kingsport, TN 37663

Date received: _____

Authorized Initials: _____

Sylvia Rainford, Editor

The Link

P.O. Box 65751

St. Paul, Minnesota 55165-0751